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SIPDIS

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TAGS: GR PGOV PREL AL
SUBJECT: GREECE: PARLIAMENT RATIFIES ALBANIA-EU
STABILIZATION AND ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT RATIFIED

REF: A. 08 TIRANA 745
1B. 08 ATHENS 01600

Classified By: A/POL COUNSELOR JEFF HOVENIER. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (U) The Greek Parliament ratified the EU/Albania Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) January 14. The ruling New Democracy party and main opposition party, PASOK, (who collectively hold 253 of the 300 seats in Parliament) both backed the agreement. Deputy Foreign Minister Yiannis Valinakis said the agreement would bring Albania under the direct monitoring of the EU, thus promoting reform in Albania and better protection of the Greek minority's human rights. The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and the far-right popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) party both strongly criticized the agreement. KKE blasted the government and main opposition for supporting with the "manipulation" of Albania by NATO and the EU, while LAOS berated ND and PASOK for "ignoring ongoing abuses of the Greek minority."

12. (C) On November 21, Greece and Albania finally reached agreement on the establishment of two cemeteries for Greek soldiers killed in WWII in Albania (ref b). MFA contacts had previously suggested that Parliamentary consideration of the SAA would be "facilitated" by completion of the negotiations on the military cemeteries.

SPECKHARD